Ministry of Environment

Plan for 2013-14

Government of Saskatchewan

PLAN FOR 2013-14

Statement from the Minister

I am pleased to present the Ministry of Environment's Plan for 2013-14, which identifies strategies and key actions that deliver the Ministry's mission to provide public service excellence in protecting the environment and promoting sustainable use of natural resources to enhance economic and social benefits.

The Government's Direction and Budget for 2013-14 are built on the principle of *Balanced Growth*, supporting an ongoing focus on sound economic growth and shared prosperity.

Aligned with Government's Direction, the Ministry is committed to ensure enhanced environmental protection and to support economic growth in Saskatchewan by implementing a results-based approach for environmental regulation that is timely, certain and achieves desired environmental outcomes.

Results-based regulation (RBR) focuses on results, customer service excellence, fostering innovation and ensuring that the Ministry is able to balance environmental protection with promoting the sustainable use of natural resources. RBR is supported by modern legislation, information management systems, and an efficient, effective organization.

The Saskatchewan Environmental Code (code) is a key component of RBR. The code provides regulatory clarity by defining the government's expectations and desired results for environmental protection and sustainable resource use. The first edition of the code, *The Environmental Management and Protection Act* and *The Forest Resources Management Act* are expected to be proclaimed and come into force in early 2013-14 and work on new code chapters will continue.

The Ministry continues to refine and develop its recently launched on-line portal. The portal exemplifies the goals of the Government in delivering better customer service. Commencing April 1, 2013 the Ministry will launch a new automated hunting and angling licence purchase and distribution service. Clients will be able to obtain their licences on-line, through a vendor or by telephone. The new program will also provide cost savings and an up-to-date licence information data bank which will enhance compliance and enforcement programming and enable new licensing and marketing opportunities.

The Ministry will report on progress made toward this plan, within the financial parameters provided, in the 2013-14 Annual Report.

The Honourable Ken Cheveldayoff
Minister of Environment

Response to Government Direction

The government remains committed to further establishing Saskatchewan as the best place to live, work and raise a family.

The Saskatchewan Plan for Growth – Vision 2020 and Beyond identifies principles, goals and actions to ensure Saskatchewan continues to benefit from the opportunities and meet the challenges of a growing province. Keeping government's focus on Balanced Growth, the plan outlines the key activities that the Government of Saskatchewan will undertake in pursuit of sustained, disciplined growth and a better Saskatchewan.

Government's Vision

"...a strong and growing Saskatchewan, the best place in Canada – to live, to work, to start a business, to get an education, to raise a family and to build a life."

Sustaining growth and opportunities for Saskatchewan people	Improving our quality of life	Making life more affordable	Delivering responsive and responsible government

Government's vision and four goals provide the framework for ministries, agencies and third parties to focus on achieving greater success in the delivery of government services. *The Saskatchewan Plan for Growth – Vision 2020 and Beyond* provides the enabling strategies and actions that the Government of Saskatchewan will undertake to build a strong and growing Saskatchewan. The 2013-14 budget theme of Balanced Growth reflects the government's commitment to achieving the Saskatchewan Plan for Growth.

All ministries and agencies will report on progress and results achieved in their 2013-14 annual reports. This honours government's commitment to keep its promises and ensures greater transparency and accountability to the people of Saskatchewan.

Mission, Strategies and Actions

Mission Statement

The Ministry of Environment provides public service excellence in protecting the environment and promoting sustainable use of natural resources to enhance economic and social benefits.

Enhance environmental protection

Strategy

A healthy and productive environment

Key Actions

- Maintain productive and biologically diverse forests through forest renewal and protection from invasive insects and diseases, such as the spread of mountain pine beetle from Alberta's lodgepole pine forests.
- Protect the pristine waters of the northern boreal watersheds from the impacts of development through baseline assessment, monitoring for change and assessment of risks resulting from development.
- Protect source water through the monitoring of industrial facilities and compliance programs.
- Maintain Saskatchewan's air quality through airshed management, monitoring, use of good quality data, partnerships and national programs.
- Provide effective protection for and maintain Boreal Caribou populations and habitat in the province.
- Develop a Multi-Species Action Plan for species at risk in an area of southwest Saskatchewan.

Strategy

Impacts on the environment are minimized

Key Actions

- Continue to identify, protect and manage sites within the Provincial Representative Areas Network.
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase our ability to respond to the impacts of climate change, while accommodating economic growth, through promoting investment in low-carbon technologies and innovative solutions.
- Ensure that development and industrial activity proceed in a manner that protects the environment and human health and safety through environmental assessment and management of industrial sites and compliance activities.
- Ensure effective solid waste management via landfills, transfer stations and recycling programs.

Photo Credit: Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport, Hans-Gerhard Pfaff, Downtown Regina

Enhance service quality

Strategy

Ministry service is client-focused

Key Actions

- Ensure Ministry clients have multiple options to access services through channels such as the Client Service Office, on-line portals, in-person and telephone service.
- Develop customer service standards and measures to improve our service in supporting the needs of towns, villages, rural and urban municipalities and businesses in Saskatchewan.
- Ensure public safety by focusing wildfire suppression activity on protecting people as the highest priority.
- Continue to seek service quality improvements that will increase efficiency and effectiveness in delivering environmental assessments in Saskatchewan.
- Identify and undertake new Lean initiatives to improve program and service quality.

Photo Credit: Ministry of Environment

Facilitate economic growth

Strategy

Regulatory environment is timely, clear and encourages innovation

Key Actions

- Implement the Saskatchewan Environmental Code to foster innovation by adopting best practices in environmental management and allowing proponents to use alternative solutions and technologies for achieving compliance.
- Enhance implementation of clear and effective processes toward fulfilling the Ministry's legal duty to consult with First Nations and Métis communities.
- Maximize provincial-federal cooperation/coordination to minimize overlap and duplication through agreements and memorandums of understanding.

Strategy

Sustainable allocation of natural resources

Key Actions

- Lead land use planning processes that inform development and resource allocation decisions that are supported by diverse stakeholder and user groups.
- Develop a harvest plan for fish and wildlife that supports commercial and recreational use and sustainability.
- Provide appropriate development and use opportunities on Crown resource lands through the review, approval and management of land use dispositions.
- Facilitate land acquisition by Treaty Land Entitlement First Nations and First Nations with Specific Claim agreements.
- Support a commercially viable forest sector through a reliable forest inventory and the promotion of maximum use of the sustainable harvest volume schedule.
- Provide wildfire protection for the marketable timber supply and northern industrial infrastructure in Saskatchewan.

Photo Credit: Jim Knelson, Bear Berry

Improve transparency and accountability

Strategy

Information about the environment is timely, accurate and readily available

Key Actions

- Credible measurement, reporting and verification data are available on the Ministry website.
- Continue to refine and improve client and public access to information on the Ministry's website and on-line portal.

Strategy

People, businesses and communities understand, support and comply with environmental regulations

Key Actions

- Finalize the development and implementation of the Ministry's Compliance and Enforcement Plan in a manner that supports the results-based regulatory framework.
- Develop and deliver educational materials and workshops on the new environmental regulatory framework.
- Monitor the effectiveness of the Ministry's compliance assurance approaches.

Photo Credit: Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport, Greg Huszar Photography, Fishing on Jan Lake

Pursue continuous improvement

Strategy

The Ministry seeks better ways to do things

Key Actions

- Review, prepare and implement a modern *Wildfire Act* to better manage provincial wildfire activities.
- Apply Lean principles which lead to efficiencies in the delivery of Ministry services.
- Enhance the Ministry's results-based approach to environmental regulation, in line with Government's growth initiative of removing red tape and regulatory streamlining, through the next phase of the Saskatchewan Environmental Code and *The Results-Based Regulation Act*.
- Implement the use of a Ministry safety management system to prevent and reduce workplace-related injury and illness.
- Implement a new online hunting and angling licence purchase and distribution service.

Strategy

Programs and services are effective, efficient and regularly evaluated

Key Actions

- Review processes used for land use planning.
- Implement the use of a Customer Relations Management (CRM) software system to optimize delivery of Ministry programs and services in our 44 field offices.
- Review core programs to ensure efficient and effective delivery.

Strategy

The Ministry uses information and knowledge effectively

Key Actions

- Establish certifications and/or designations for technical and scientific positions in conjunction with the appropriate association.
- Participate in inter-provincial forums at the technical and policy development level to help ensure that environmental protection and resource management programming and requirements are current, consistent and defendable.

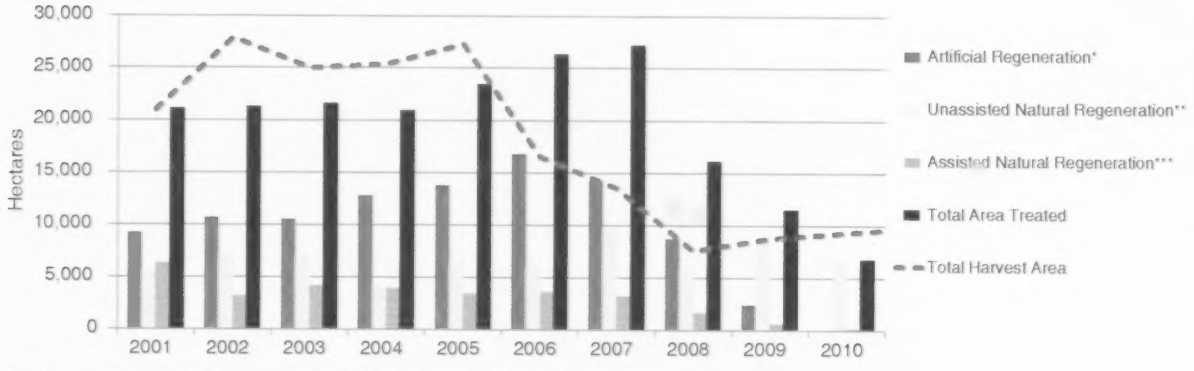
Performance Measures

The Ministry of Environment tracks and measures a number of indicators that reflect the full mandate of the Ministry. The Ministry 2013-14 Plan highlights a few key measures. Saskatchewan's 2013 *State of the Environment Report* will further provide extensive information on the condition and trends of the physical environment in the province. The Ministry is also working towards developing additional measures to report on as we adopt a results-based regulatory system.

Two measures included in previous plans, Drinking Water Quality Standards Compliance and Drinking Water Quality Satisfaction, are not part of the 2013-14 Ministry Plan as the responsibility for drinking water is now with the Saskatchewan Water Security Agency.

Measure

Number of hectares of forest harvest areas treated



** Artificial regeneration consists of planting of seedlings primarily on spruce forest types*
*** Unassisted Natural regeneration occurs primarily on aspen forest types*
**** Assisted Natural Regeneration consists of a mechanical scarification of the harvest area and occurs primarily on pine types*
Source: Ministry of Environment

Measure Description

Provincially, the renewal of forests following harvesting activities is performed primarily by the forest industry as a condition of their forestry licenses. *The Forest Resources Management Act* requires that all harvested forest areas be renewed. Prior to industry taking over responsibility for forest renewal in the mid-1980s, forest renewal was the responsibility of the Province. The Ministry of Environment funds a program for renewing forest on these older, historical harvest areas that did not renew successfully when originally harvested.

Forest renewal is a critical component in maintaining a healthy and productive forest and environment. The capture of carbon in regenerating forests is an important sink for carbon dioxide (CO_2). The photosynthetic activities of forests are important for the production of oxygen in the air we breathe. New growth in regenerating forests provides

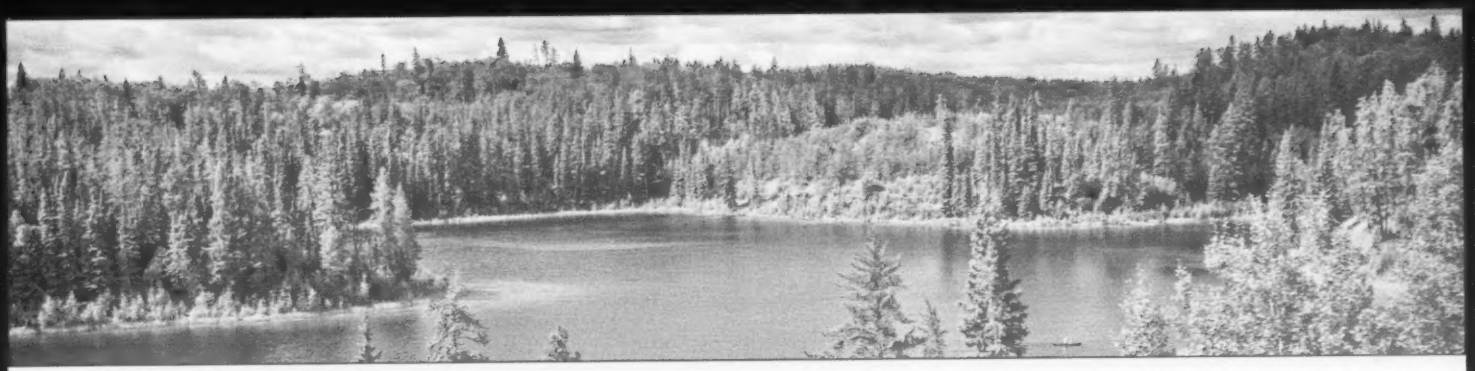


Photo Credit: Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport, photo by Paul Austring, Buffalo Narrows

Measure Description (Continued)

important forage for large animals and a mix of regenerating and mature forest provides a wide range of habitats to support a variety of animals and plants.

The boreal forest of Saskatchewan is an ecosystem primarily driven by disturbance. This means that forests will naturally renew themselves following major disturbance events, such as fire. Commercial harvesting of forests is similar to natural disturbance, but some important differences exist. For this reason, forest renewal activities can require tree planting and tending activity on recently harvested areas to ensure proper regeneration.

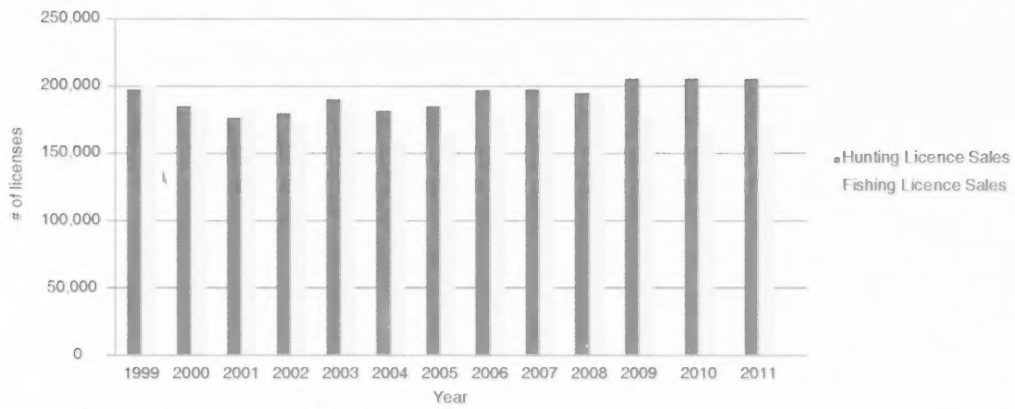
Trends in the data over the past decade show a marked increase in the use of natural regeneration (assisted and unassisted) over planting. This has occurred for several reasons. Natural regeneration of harvested areas is much less expensive than planting and, in the case of pine, leads to similar renewal success. The past decade has also seen the increased use of aspen forest types as the product mix produced in Saskatchewan mills has changed. Aspen trees are best renewed using natural regeneration techniques, so a shift towards harvesting more aspen will also mean a shift towards more natural regeneration. Finally the trend over the past few years has been for less harvest, therefore less forest to regenerate. This is a direct result of the continuing struggles of the forestry sector following the collapse of the United States housing market in 2006.

The primary risk for renewal is not that the forest will not renew properly (as left to its own devices, forest will regenerate in most cases) but that the forest will not regenerate to the species that were harvested. For both ecological and economic sustainability reasons it is important to maintain the forest types that were found on the landscape prior to harvesting. The forest industry is diligent in meeting its commitments to forest renewal and the Ministry works with the forest industry to ensure it is continuing to do so.

Photo Credit: Jim Kroshus Wildlife Photography, Snow Geese in Flight

Measure

Number of hunting and angling licences sold



Source: Ministry of Environment, Fish and Wildlife Branch

Measure Description

Hunting and angling are of social, cultural and economic importance in Saskatchewan. Licence sales are tracked annually and serve both as an indicator of short- and long-term interest in these activities and as an indication of the importance of hunting and fishing to the economic health of the province. Measuring the number of licences sold helps to determine the priority areas for population assessments and to manage competing interests of users. As such, this measure aligns with the Ministry's strategies of enhancing environmental protection and facilitating economic growth.

The Ministry has experienced high levels of participation in angling and hunting activities by members of the public in the past, which supports continued focus on wildlife and fisheries resources conservation and management.

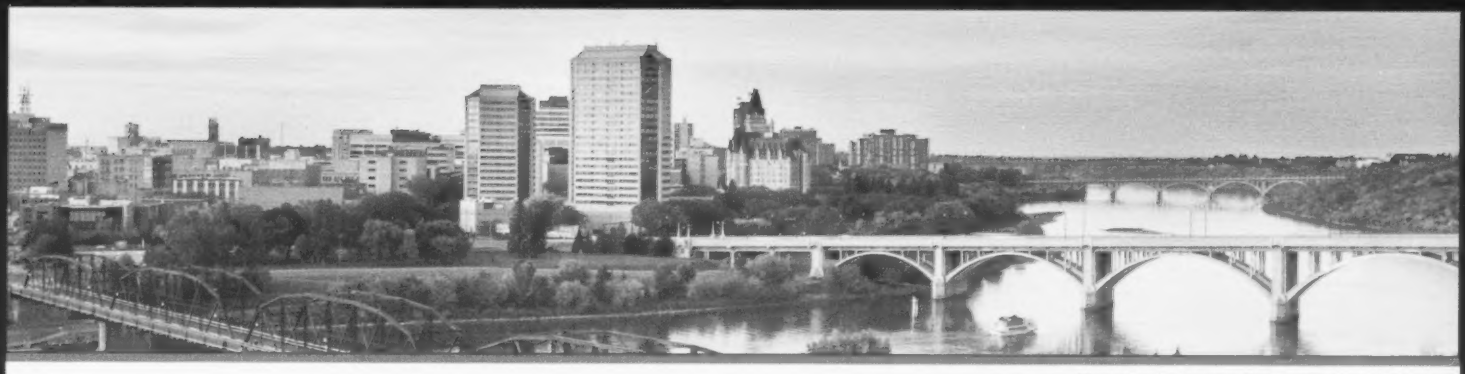
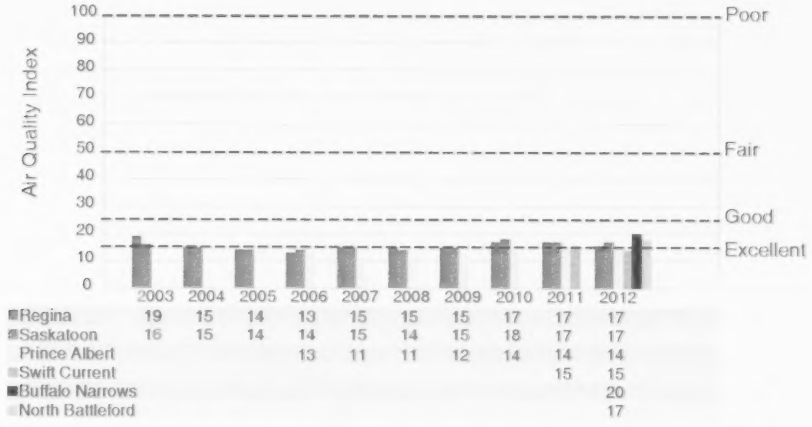


Photo Credit: Tourism Saskatoon, City of Bridges

Measure

Air Quality Index



	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Regina	19	15	14	13	15	15	15	17	17	17
Saskatoon	16	15	14	14	15	14	15	18	17	17
Prince Albert				13	11	11	12	14	14	14
Swift Current									15	15
Buffalo Narrows										20
North Battleford										17

Source: Ministry of Environment, Technical Resources Unit (also available online at www.environment.gov.sk.ca/airqualityindex)

Measure Description

The Air Quality Index (AQI) is a communication tool designed to describe the general air quality in urban areas by transforming ambient measurements of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, ozone, carbon monoxide and particulates into a single number or descriptive term that represents the measured quality of the air. The index is also used to monitor long-term trends in air quality. Measuring and evaluating urban air quality is an important step in meeting the Ministry's objective of ensuring clean air. Maintaining air quality is fully aligned with the Ministry's strategies to enhance environmental protection improving our quality of life and to improve transparency and accountability. This measure is an essential tool to monitor air quality trends and a basis for making comparisons of air quality in different urban areas.

Saskatchewan's overall approach to managing air quality is through: approvals issued pursuant to *The Clean Air Act/ Regulations* and *The Potash Refining Air Emissions Regulations*; the environmental assessment process; air quality monitoring and reporting; ambient air quality standards; air dispersion modeling; air zone management; compliance and enforcement; communications and research.

The Ministry has established air monitoring stations in Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Swift Current and, most recently, Buffalo Narrows and North Battleford. The Buffalo Narrows and North Battleford AQIs are reported here for the first time. The AQIs for Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Swift Current, North Battleford, and Buffalo Narrows have consistently rated as good to excellent and there has been a relatively stable trend in this measure. The AQI in northern communities would be expected to be higher than in the south due to higher background ozone levels, higher particulate matter levels due to forest fires and human-caused emissions from open and wood stove burning sources.

The graph above provides the AQI for those stations that are a part of the National Air Pollution Surveillance Program; however, data for all sites monitored is available on the website at www.environment.gov.sk.ca/airqualityindex.

Photo Credit: Ministry of Environment

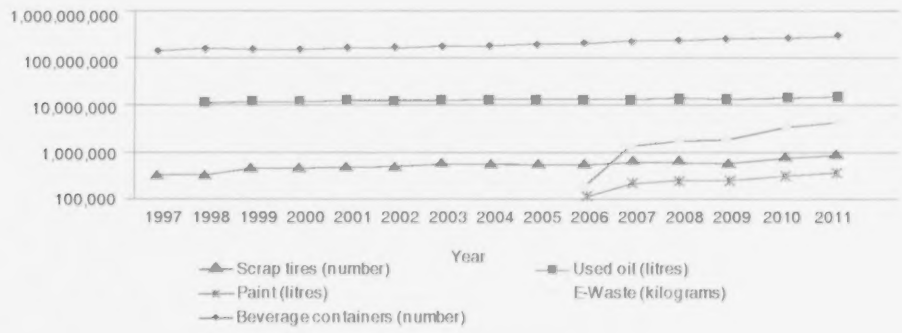
Measure Description (Continued)

Provinces within Canada are making the transition to the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI), which has a greater focus on human health. The Ministry will be making the transition to an hourly AQHI in the 2013–14 fiscal year but will continue using the annual AQI, as it is a better overall long-term performance measure of the state of the environment.

Photo Credit: Darrel Kajati Photography, SARCAN Processing Plant

Measure

Recycling Rates



Sources: Third Party Organizations Annual Reports, except for beverage container data.
Notes: Beverage container and e-waste data are based on a fiscal year. The fiscal year 2008-09 is represented by 2008. All other data is based on a calendar year.

Measure Description

Recycling is an indicator of public commitment to waste minimization and indicates shared responsibility for environmental stewardship. The Ministry administers the enabling regulations for four industry-led stewardship programs and oversees a fifth program, the Beverage Container Collection and Recycling System, through a contract with SARCAN. The recycling indicators report on the actions of the Ministry of Environment and stewardship programs in preventing and reducing risks to the health of people and the environment, and key actions related to expanding solid waste management and recycling programs. 2011-12 was another productive year for recycling in the province, where product capture rates increased for all but one program.

Market conditions, public commitment and good stewardship practices determine the recycling rates. Excluding refillable beer bottles, over 87 per cent of all deposit beverage containers sold in Saskatchewan are recycled, which makes this one of the highest return rates of all beverage container programs in Canada. As of April 2011, SARCAN had recycled five billion containers.

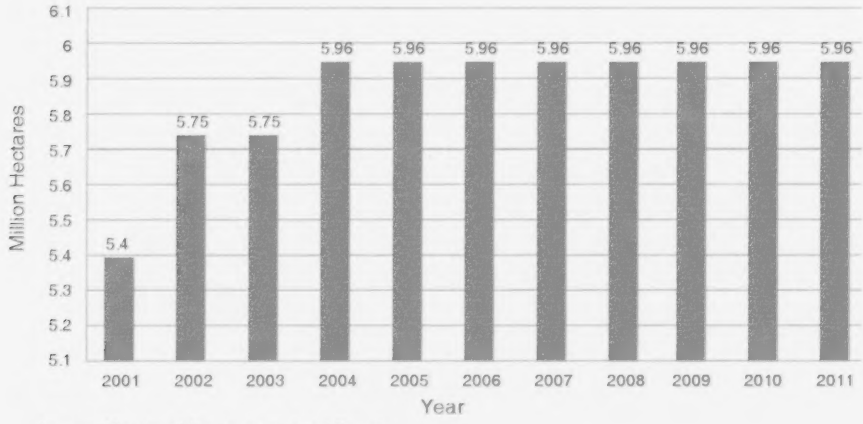
The Ministry continues to promote recycling as a means to increase the recycling rates. The expansion of waste electronic products collected from the industrial, commercial and institutional sector as well as the Ministry's efforts to develop and implement a Multi-Material Recycling Program and Agricultural Plastics Recycling Program are expected to increase recycling rates in the future.

Key risks to achieving the measure include market conditions such as the value of recyclable materials and access to purchasers of recyclable materials, sufficient funding sources for recycling programs and sufficient public commitment as illustrated through participation in recycling efforts and support for recycling fees and levies.

Photo Credit: Larry Easton, Duck Mountain Provincial Park

Measure

Number of hectares in the Representative Areas Network



Source: Ministry of Environment, Land Branch

Measure Description

The Representative Areas Network (RAN) is intended to conserve representative and unique landscapes throughout the 11 ecoregions of the province. The RAN includes designated Crown lands that have been given a level of protection by virtue of legislation and private lands that are managed for biodiversity by agreement. The measure of the number of hectares in the RAN is an indicator of the province's commitment to supporting the protection and retention of native habitat and of long-term ecological health and aligns with the key actions of maintaining a healthy and productive environment and minimizing impacts on the environment. Establishing protected areas is seen in the international science community as a "natural solution" and a powerful tool against carbon emissions and possibly climate change. RAN areas also serve to help maintain biodiversity and act as benchmarks when compared to managed landscapes.

There are challenges in adding significant numbers of hectares to the RAN. In agricultural portions of the province, the vast majority of land is privately held and additions to the RAN are achieved in small quantities through conservation easements and land purchases funded by the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund. In northern Saskatchewan, even though Crown land dominates, many interests must be considered and weighed to achieve a balance between conservation and economic development.

The greatest risk to achieving the RAN targets is increasing development pressures and poorly managed development that may encroach on RAN areas.

The number of hectares in the Representative Areas Network remains unchanged; however, a number of sites have been identified within integrated land use plans and, as these land use plans are approved and recommendations for designation of proposed representative areas are implemented, hectares will be added.

Financial Summary

2013-14 Estimates	(in thousands of dollars)
Central Management and Services	16,953
Climate Change	4,347
Landscape Stewardship	3,940
Environmental Support	2,927
Fish and Wildlife	9,808
Compliance and Field Services	16,724
Environmental Protection	39,572
Forest Services	12,488
Wildfire Management	60,154
Total Appropriation	**166.913**
Capital Asset Acquisitions	(12,699)
Capital Asset Amortization	9,061
Total Expense	**163,275**
FTE Staff Complement	**870.8**

For more information, see the Budget Estimates at: http://www.finance.gov.sk.ca/budget2013-14

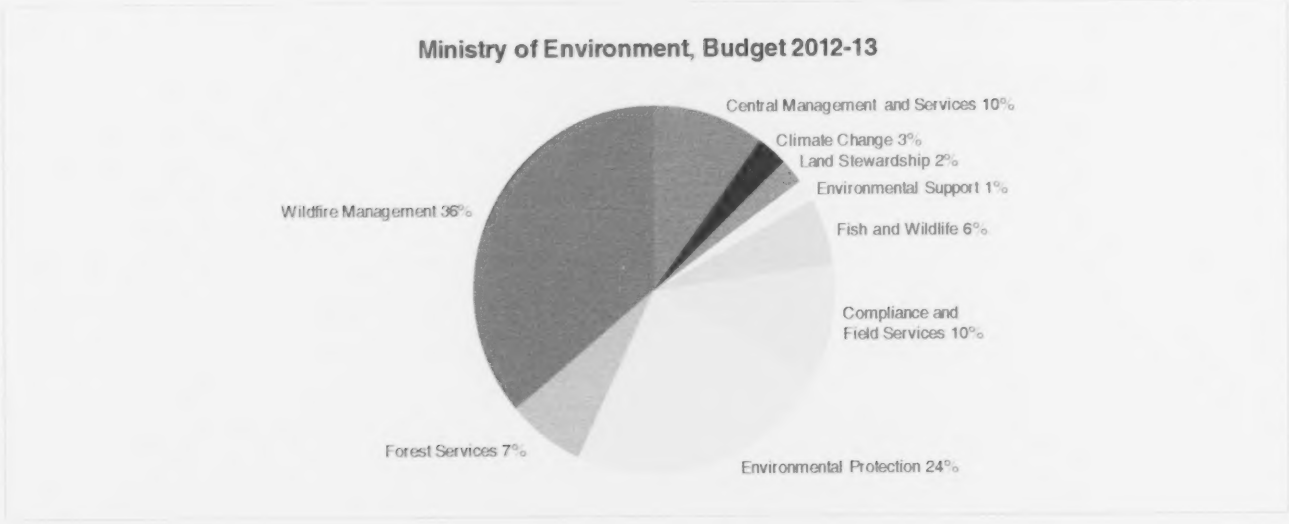


Photo Credit: Arnie Santos, Lac la Ronge

Highlights

2013-14 Budget Highlights:

- As part of the Ministry's ongoing commitment to reduce "red tape" and streamline regulatory processes, and in order to provide better service to the citizens of Saskatchewan, the Ministry is successfully continuing its transition to a Results-Based regulation system. The 2013-14 budget includes $4 million capital funding for this work to continue. Among other projects, this funding will complete an application processing and permissions management system that improves client interactions with the Ministry and shortens processing turnaround times.
- The budget includes $22.8 million for SARCAN to support its operation of the Beverage Container Collection and Recycling Program. This strategic investment represents an increase of $974,000 to meet its contractual obligations.
- The Ministry is committed to continued economic development in Northern Saskatchewan. As part of this balanced approach to ensure environmental sustainability, the Ministry in 2013-14, will utilize $250 thousand to finalize a provincial Woodland Caribou Recovery Strategy that will help protect future Caribou populations and habitat while allowing for sustainable development in Northern Saskatchewan.
- The 2013-14 budget includes an additional $300 thousand dedicated to the "South of The Divide" initiative that will directly support the province's growth agenda by building a provincial Species at Risk Management program in Southern Saskatchewan that will protect species at risk and balance economic development in the region.
- The Multi-Material Recycling Program (or MMRP) supports the Growth Plan by providing a province wide recycling program for household paper, cardboard, plastic, metal and glass. $500 thousand from the Go Green Fund will provide infrastructure necessary to begin implementing the program and help municipalities deal with the waste pressures of increased growth.
- The Ministry is committed to the continued funding of the 5 year Boreal Water Management Strategy. To date $2 million has been provided to monitor the ecosystem effects of developments in northern Saskatchewan and to establish a baseline, demonstrating the government's commitment to environmental protection and sustainable development in the boreal region. $1 million is committed from the 2013-14 budget as part of this continued effort.

For More Information

Please visit the Ministry's website at www.environment.gov.sk.ca for more information on the Ministry's programs and services.

Front Page Photo Credits

Canola and flax fields	*Biking, Narrow Hills Provincial Park*	*Over the Hill Orchards*	*Saskatchewan Legislative Building*
Photographer, Charles Melnick	*Greg Huszar Photography*	*Greg Huszar Photography*	*Greg Huszar Photography*